

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD  
WASHINGTON, DC 20423**

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**STB Docket NO. AB-55 (Sub-No. 586X)**

**CSX Transportation, Inc.--Abandonment Exemption--  
in McMinn County, TN**

### **BACKGROUND**

In this proceeding, CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT) has filed a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 seeking exemption from the requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 in connection with the abandonment of a portion of its Central Region, Appalachian Division, Athens & Tellico Branch, KD Subdivision, extending between milepost OKW 333.40 and milepost OKW 334.24, a distance of .84 miles in Athens, McMinn County, TN. A map depicting the rail line in relationship to the area served is appended to the report. If the exemption becomes effective, the railroad will be able to salvage track, ties and other railroad appurtenances, and to dispose of the right-of-way.

### **DESCRIPTION OF THE LINE**

In its petition, CSXT states that the only shipper on the line, Athens Supply Company (Athens Supply), which operates a facility at the end of the line in Athens, TN for inbound shipments of lumber. CSXT states that Athens Supply does not use the line for outbound shipments. Athens Supply transported 2 carloads of lumber in 1999, 1 carload in 2000, and 1 carload in 2001. The line was embargoed on February 14, 2001 due to poor track conditions. The line is made from light weight rail that warrants replacement, a number of the ties on the line require significant remediation. The proposed project is located within the city limits of Athens, TN.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

CSXT submitted an environmental report that concludes the quality of the human environment will not be affected significantly as a result of the abandonment or any post abandonment activities, including salvage and disposition of the right-of-way. CSXT served the environmental and historical reports on a number of appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies as required by the Surface Transportation Board's environmental rules at 49 CFR 1105.7(b). Also, we have consulted with appropriate agencies and individuals to verify the railroad's report and to obtain additional information and comments regarding the potential environmental effects of the proposed abandonment. Contacts have included the Director of Public Works, City of Athens; County Planning Commission c/o McMinn County Courthouse; Department of

Environment & Conservation, Division of Water Pollution Control; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4; U. S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service; Corps of Engineers, Department of the Army; District Conservation, National Resources Conservation Service; State Historic Preservation Office, Tennessee Historical Commission; National Park Service; U. S. Department of Agriculture; and Tennessee Dept. of Transportation.

## **CONDITIONS**

We recommend that no environmental conditions be placed on any decision granting abandonment authority.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the information provided from all sources to date, we conclude that, as currently proposed, abandonment of the line will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, the environmental impact statement process is unnecessary.

Alternatives to the proposed discontinuance would include denial (and, therefore no change in operations), discontinuance of service without abandonment, and continued operation by another operator. In this case, the existing quality of the human environment and energy consumption should not be affected.

## **PUBLIC USE**

If abandonment and salvage of the rail line does not take place, the right-of-way may be suitable for other public use. A request containing the requisite four-part showing for imposition of a public use condition (49 CFR 1152.28) must be filed with the Board and served on the railroad within the time specified in the Federal Register notice.

## **TRAILS USE**

A request for a notice of interim trail use (NITU) is due to the Board, with a copy to the railroad, within 10 days of publication of the notice of the petition for exemption in the Federal Register. However, the Board will accept late-filed requests as long as it retains jurisdiction to do so in a particular case. This request must comply with the Board's rules for use of rights-of-way as trails (49 CFR 1152.29).

## **PUBLIC ASSISTANCE**

The Board's Office of Public Services responds to questions regarding interim trail use, public use, and other reuse alternatives. You may contact the Office of Public Services directly at (202) 565-1592, or mail inquiries to Surface Transportation Board, Office of Public Services, Washington, DC 20423.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL COMMENTS**

If you wish to file comments regarding this environmental assessment, send an **original and two copies** to Vernon A. Williams, Office of the Secretary, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20423, to the attention of Ann Newman, who prepared this environmental assessment. **Please refer to Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 586X)** in all correspondence addressed to the Board. If you have questions regarding this environmental assessment, you should contact Ann Newman at (202) 565-1629.

Date made available to the public: June 8, 2001.

**Comment due date: July 9, 2001.**

By the Surface Transportation Board, Victoria Rutson, Acting Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis.

Vernon A. Williams  
Secretary

Attachment

MAP NEEDS TO BE SCANNED.